

LISSON GALLERY LONDON LTD.

67 LISSON STREET, LONDON NW1 5DA

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

JOHN BALDESSARI

Private View: Saturday 14 May 1988

Open to the public: 16 May to 25 June 1988

John Baldessari's first major exhibition in London since his show at the Jack Wendler Gallery in 1972 opens at the Lisson Gallery, 67 Lisson Street on Monday 16th May 1988.

John Baldessari, 57 years old, has been a major force throughout the 70s and early 80s. He has taught at CalArts since 1970, and both as an artist and teacher he has been particularly influential on a whole generation of younger artists. Students at CalArts have included David Salle, Jack Goldstein, Ross Bleckner, Ashley Bickerton, Matt Mullican and Eric Fischl. Following the exhibition at the Lisson Gallery, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles is planning to open a major retrospective of his work in 1989 which will tour in the United States and internationally.

His current work is constructed from photographs, drawing heavily on film stills of people and places for his own photographic images and more recently introducing painting and colour into his work. The following text articulates John Baldessari's own thoughts on his recent work.

" My works in the last few years have become (perhaps) mini-morality plays, or maybe brief sermons. Here I am thinking of Ingmar Bergman with his assembly of repertoire players that he employs to illustrate his views of the human condition.

Another example: the soul, the intellect, and desire as seen by Montaigne, Sterne, Rabelais, or Cervantes. For my characters, I use the generic businessman, the sportsman, the artist, etc. in situations that run the gamut from frailty to nobility seen through the devices of paradox, opposition and other literary strategies. I attempt to exclude nothing in order to show the facade, while zooming in on the small tell-tale action, the glance - betrayers of those facades. In short to portray the gap between who we think we are and what is our innermost character. The space between our fantasies and maudlin reality.

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To achieve these ends, I utilize 1. colour as signal, 2. various framing and scale strategies and 3. syntactical structure. I list only a few of my tools. The point I wish to make is that I tend to work much like a writer/poet and I make sentences of a sort. I think of images as words and vice versa. As Flaubert saw his task, I see mine - to find the precise and only work, the right images. And when these atomistic parts collide, powerful meanings can ensue. The job is to discover those meanings that are the most economical while at the same time being the most elegant. And with hope to agitate and disturb the thought and soul of the viewer"

John Baldessari
1988

For further information and photographs please contact
Caroline Mockett on 01-724 2739.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 10am - 6pm,
Saturday 10am - 1pm